



NEWS RELEASE

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September 16, 1999

INS to Celebrate Citizenship Day by Welcoming 20,000 New Citizens

Agency Improving Citizenship Processing; Doubling Production Levels

WASHINGTON – In recognition of Citizenship Day, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will swear-in more than 20,000 new citizens at more than 30 naturalization ceremonies being held across the country to honor the new Americans as they accept the rights and privileges of citizenship.

Citizenship Day—September 17—is the day, 212 years ago, when the U.S. Constitution was signed and the first immigrants to the New World became American citizens. Observances include a number of large ceremonies with about 1,000 or more participants to be held in New York City, Los Angeles and Phoenix (September 17), as well as a ceremony at the San Diego Padres baseball game (September 21) and a children's ceremony at the Sacramento Zoo (September 17).

"Welcoming new citizens is one of the most important things we do as a nation. It is a mission we take seriously at INS," said INS Commissioner Doris Meissner. "Naturalization is our top service priority. We have made tremendous headway with the naturalization program; so I am especially happy to participate in festivities to honor our newest Americans."

Faced with an unprecedented workload of naturalization applications, INS has redesigned the naturalization process to meet the twin objectives of increased productivity and assuring the highest standards of integrity. From October through July 1999, INS completed 942,910 naturalization applications—a 102 percent increase from the same period last year (467,909).

INS is nearing the end of the first year in a two-year initiative to clear the naturalization backlog and restore timely processing of citizenship applications. The time required to process a naturalization application was 28 months at the beginning of the fiscal year. Currently it stands at 13 months and will be 12 months by the end of this fiscal year (September 30, 1999). INS will further reduce that time to approximately six months by September 30, 2000. These goals are based on a projected level of 700,000 new applications filed per year for FY 1999 and FY 2000. With an aggressive plan in place to solve production problems—and with the support of the Attorney General, the Department of Justice and Congress—INS is on target to complete 1.2 million naturalization applications this fiscal year.

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“Our country’s greatness is deeply rooted in our rich immigrant tradition,” said Meissner. “New citizens bring unique cultural, scientific, artistic and economic talents that result in immeasurable contributions to our nation.”

(more)

From 1993 to 1998, 5.6 million immigrants applied for citizenship, more than the total in the last previous 30 years combined, and 3.3 million became new Americans.

On September 17, Commissioner Meissner will swear-in 1,600 new citizens at Brooklyn College in New York. On the same day, INS Deputy Commissioner Mary Ann Wyrsh will speak at a naturalization ceremony for 370 participants at the War Memorial in Baltimore. *(A listing of several nationwide ceremonies follows.)*

<u>Location</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Media Contact Number</u>
Albany, NY	60 (Fort Stanwix, Rome, NY)	802-660-5029
Baltimore, MD	370 (War Memorial)	802-660-5029
Boston, MA	300	802-660-5029
Charleston, SC	100	404-331-0253
Cincinnati, OH	140	216-552-4766
Dallas, TX	670 (ceremonies held Sept. 16-18)	214-905-5801
Denver, CO	550 (Civic Center Park)	214-905-5291
Jacksonville, FL	300	305-762-3347/3699
Hartford, CT	500	802-660-5029
Honolulu, HI	200	949-360-3096
Los Angeles, CA	2,700 (3 ceremonies of 900 each)	213-894-5071
Memphis, TN	150 (ceremonies held Sept. 16-17)	802-660-5029
Milwaukee, WI	500	312-385-1925
New Orleans, LA	110 (ceremonies held Sept.16-17)	504-589-6521
Lexington, KY	125	802-660-5029
Paducah, KY	50 (ceremony held on Sept. 15)	802-660-5029
New York, NY	6,400 (4 ceremonies of 1600 each)	212-264-1689
Orlando, FL	225	305-762-3347/3699
Philadelphia, PA	40	215-656-7171 ext. 360
Phoenix, AZ	1,500	602-514-7321
Seattle, WA	90	206-553-2231
Sacramento, CA	47 children (Sacramento Zoo on Sept. 17)	949-360-3096
San Francisco, CA	1,500 (ceremony held on September 14)	415-844-5250
San Antonio, TX	200	210-967-7047
San Diego, CA	550 (ceremonies held on Sept. 17 & 21)	619-557-5645
San Jose, CA	3,000 (ceremonies held on September 15)	415-844-5250
St. Albans, VT	39 (USS Ticonderoga - Shelburne Museum, VT)	802-660-5029
St. Louis, MO	70	214-905-5291
Tampa, FL	500	305-762-3347/3699
Tucson, AZ	1,100 (ceremony to be held on September 27)	949-360-3096
Washington, D.C.	35 (National Archives)	202-307-1565

The Oath of Allegiance for New Citizens

I hereby declare, on oath,

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that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen;
that I will support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same;
that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law;
that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law;
that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and
that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion;
so help me God.

– INS –